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SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE NEWS

REGION 4

COMPRISING STATES OF LOUISIANA, ARKANSAS
AND TEXAS, EXCEPT HIGH PLAINS AREA

REGIONAL OFFICE--FORT WORTH, TEXAS

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NO. 2

EIGHT ARKANSAS DISTRICTS APPROVED

The actual operation of soil conservation districts is underway in Arkansas!

As this issue of the News Letter was going to press, word was received from Dr. Hugh H. Bennett, Chief of the Service, announcing approval of programs and plans of work for eight Arkansas districts and the signing of memorandums of agreement setting the district programs of operation into motion.

Shortly after the arrival of the signed memorandums of agreement, Soil Conservation Service technicians were being transferred into all eight of the districts to begin making plane table surveys and farm plans preliminary to work on district farms. Most of these transfers became effective on March 1. Aerial surveys will be available on March 15, eliminating the necessity for plane table operations and thereby speeding up the work.

The eight districts beginning operations are:

Lower East Saline
Mine Creek
East Central Arkansas
Tri-River

Green County--Crowley Ridge
Magazine
Poteau River
Illinois Bayou

A total of ten districts have been organized in Arkansas. Crooked Creek has elected supervisors and adopted its program and work plan, but has not yet had its Memo of Understanding approved in Washington. Central Valleys District has not yet elected supervisors or completed the conservation program and district work plan.

STATUS OF ORGANIZED DISTRICTS

Name	Approx. Acreage	Certifi- cate of Organi- zation Issued	Super- visors Elected	Program and Work Plan Adopted	Memo of Un- derstanding between USDA and District Approved
Lower East Saline Green County-	489,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Crowley Ridge	175,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mine Creek	89,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Magazine	66,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
East Central Arkansas	711,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Poteau River	153,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tri-River	390,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Illinois Bayou	176,640	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Crooked Creek	385,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Central Valleys	1,150,000	Yes	No	No	No
Total Acreage	3,784,640				

The supervisors are aware of their responsibilities as a governing body of a legally constituted soil conservation district and plans are in progress to determine priorities for selection of work areas, development of individual farm conservation plans and performance of follow-up work on farms within such work areas.

The supervisors will adopt a standard form of cooperative agreement with land owners and operators for soil conservation work. Such cooperative agreements are to be entered into before the performance of soil conservation work on any farm within the district except preliminary work involved in the preparation of individual farm conservation plans.

Geographically the eight districts approved are located in parts of the counties listed as follows: Lower East Saline--Ashley, Drew, Lincoln Counties; Green County-Crowley Ridge--Green County; Mine Creek--Howard County; Magazine--Logan County; East Central Arkansas--Clebune, White, Lenoke, Pulaski and Faulkner Counties; Poteau River--Scott County; Tri-River--Lawrence and Randolph Counties; and Illinois Bayou--Pope County.

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THE DISTRICTS

Henry A. Wallace, Secretary, Department of Agriculture

"---Through the local soil conservation districts the Department of Agriculture should be able to assist farmers in formulating and executing comprehensive plans for bringing about wise land use. I think it is important, therefore, that the districts should not come to be looked upon as having significance only for the program of the Soil Conservation Service, but they should be seen as local governmental units, organized democratically, functioning over properly bounded areas, and possessing the necessary governmental power to enable them to carry on well rounded agricultural programs."

* * * * *

M. L. Wilson, Under Secretary of Agriculture

"---In my opinion, these laws which permit farmers to work together and with public agencies to arrest soil blowing and soil washing, are important milestones in the national conservation program.

"--It was only natural during the years of rapid agricultural expansion that little thought should be given to the welfare of the land. During colonial days no prophet dared to predict that a population of 3 millions of people confined to a narrow shelf of land along the Atlantic shore would swell to 130 millions in 150 years and reach the Pacific. If there had been such a prophet he would not have been believed. It was natural then to look upon the land supply as being inexhaustible, like the air. It was also natural to look upon one's relationship to the land in a purely personal light.

"---This philosophy, born of plenty, held over long after Colonial times and early settlement days, and did not begin really to undergo great change until the supply of good lands began to dwindle.

"---The individual landowner and society share the responsibility of preserving our lands for generations to come. But up to now our efforts at sharing responsibility have been awkward and ineffectual. Society and the landowner have not been able to enter fully and freely into the partnership which is necessary if the responsibility of each is to be met. The mechanism for doing so has been lacking.

"---Now, however, a number of states have passed soil conservation district laws which provide the means for close partnership and cooperation among farmers, ranchers and society in order to control accelerated erosion.

"---The philosophy of democratic government revolves around the principle that the mass of the people is capable of governing. It is my conviction that a democracy, therefore, cannot be said to be succeeding unless the mass of the people participates in the affairs of government. Only their participation makes a democracy work. What I like about the districts legislation is that this principle is uppermost.

"---The soil conservation districts laws place the responsibility for the initiative and management of soil conservation program upon local folk."

* * * * *

Philip M. Glick, Chief, Land Policy Division, Office of
the Solicitor, U. S. Department of Agriculture

"---The need for state legislation in this field arises out of the fact that the problem of erosion cannot be adequately solved by work in widely separated areas. Unless state legislation provides a mechanism by which farmers can organize themselves for cooperative action, to apply on their lands the erosion control practices observed on the demonstration projects of the Soil Conservation Service, the full benefits of the Federal program cannot be realized. In a word state legislation is needed to assure permanent results from the expenditure of federal funds."

* * * * *

Dillon S. Myer, Acting Assistant Chief, Soil Conservation Service

"---Up to the present time, activities of the Service have been confined for the most part to the introduction and application, in cooperation with individual farmers, of practical soil conserving measures and practices to the lands within relatively small watershed demonstration areas. The demonstration program, however, has been only the first step in a large national program of soil and water conservation. Its purpose has been to introduce conservation measures and practices applicable to a large natural land-use region to a small area that represents as nearly as possible a "cross section" of the region, where they can be tested under actual operating conditions and studied in the light of their possible usefulness to the larger area.

"---Obviously, the demonstration program does not attempt to solve the problem of the region, it seeks only to point the way toward possible solution.

"--From the standpoint of national adequacy, effective soil conservation requires the intensive and coordinate treatment of all lands in every natural region of similar soil, slope, climatic, and type of farming characteristics, in accordance with their needs and adaptabilities. This cannot be achieved by the intensive application of conservation measures to the lands of a small group of farmer's within boundaries of demonstration projects and camp areas. It requires the effective cooperation of many farmers, state institutions and federal agencies. As rapidly as soil conservation districts are formed in the various states, the Service, in cooperation with state committees, will place primary emphasis upon the principle of cooperation with large groups of farmers legally organized under state law, whose holdings and operations represent all land within a complete watershed or natural land use area, and who are cooperatively engaged in the prevention of soil wastage on a large scale.

"--This does not mean that the demonstration program is to be abandoned, or that the principle of demonstration is to be ignored as the Service prepares to assist the districts. The projects and camp areas already in operation, and individual demonstration farms established in cooperation with the Extension Service together with a few new demonstration units to be established in the future, will become increasingly necessary to provide a background of substantial experience in planning and applying control measures within the districts, and to serve as proving grounds where measures and practices can be applied and studied under conditions peculiar to each area."

* * * * *

J. W. Sargent, State Coordinator, Soil
Conservation Service, Arkansas

"--The enactment of the soil conservation districts law of the Arkansas General Assembly opened the way for a greatly enlarged, and at the same time, a more intensive state program for conservation of soil and water resources.

"--The districts law places responsibility for initiative and management of the soil conservation program upon the local people and governmental agencies are in the relationship of cooperators. The demonstration program in soil conservation is a proper forerunner and guide to the districts program in that established demonstrations provide farmers the opportunity to observe and appraise erosion control treatments and practices.

"--Declining soil resources (farm capital resources, too) is more distressing in consideration of more fundamental problems, than is decline of income. Soil conservation requires a changed attitude on the part of the farmer toward the land."

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND--ARKANSAS DISTRICTS

The Soil Conservation Districts Law, Act No. 197, was enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas, approved March 3, 1937. This was the first districts law passed in the United States.

The Act named the members of the state soil conservation committee. Immediately after the passage of the act and its enactment into law by the governor's signature, the state committee organized and shortly thereafter received petitions from farmers in groups of 25 or more requesting the establishment of soil conservation districts. The first local hearing on a petition to determine if a district was needed was conducted at Dierks on July 8, 1937. By October 18, 1937, hearings on 24 petitions had been conducted by the state committee.

A total of 56 petitions have been received by the state committee and these were consolidated into 34. In the 34, referendums have been conducted in 10 districts and the district organization set up. Supervisors have been elected, programs and plans of work completed and memorandums of understanding approved in Washington on eight of the ten. One district has completed the program and plan of work and its memo of understanding with the Service is pending. The tenth district has not yet elected supervisors or adopted a program and plan of work.

In the 10 referenda held in the above districts, more than 10,000 landowners voted "for" with less than 250 voting "against." The first districts voted in were the Mine Creek, Magazine, Lower East Saline, and East Central Arkansas districts, elections being held in these districts on November 12, 1937.

Invaluable service was performed by the Extension Service in pre-educational work prior to the organization of the districts. Agents explained the provisions of the act to farm groups and individual farmers and assisted in calling hearings preliminary to district organization.

Educational work also was done by the vocational agricultural teachers, and other interested agencies.

ARKANSAS STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Considerable credit for the rapid progress Arkansas has made in organizing and getting its district program into operation goes to the members of the State Committee, who are:

C. C. Randall, acting assistant director of Extension, State of Arkansas, Chairman of the State Soil Conservation Committee.

Charles A. Gillett, State Forester for Arkansas.

C. O. Brannen, Assistant director of Experiment Stations,
University of Arkansas.

E. B. Mathews, State Director of Vocational Education,
Arkansas.

The committee has given generously of its time and knowledge in considering petitions, conducting hearings, defining district boundaries, and in assisting supervisors to develop sound programs and work plans for each district as created.

A SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS LAW LIBRARY

Each individual employee of the Soil Conservation Service in Region 4 should read and become familiar with the information regarding soil conservation districts contained in the following:

1. Act No. 197, State of Arkansas, Soil Conservation Districts Law, enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas.
2. November issue of "Soil Conservation," official publication of the Soil Conservation Service.
3. Miscellaneous Publication No. 293, Soil Conservation Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, "Soil Conservation Districts for Erosion Control."
4. "Basic Provisions of the Standard Soil Conservation Districts Law," mimeographed bulletin, INF-72-37.
5. "A Representative District Program and Work Plan," mimeographed publication to be issued from the Regional Office.

WHAT THE STANDARD ACT PROVIDES

The act provides, in essence, a procedure by which soil conservation districts may be organized--such districts to be governmental sub-divisions of the state--to exercise two types of powers:

- 1: The power to establish and administer erosion control projects and preventive measures, including assistance to farmers in controlling erosion on their lands.
- 2: The power to prescribe land-use regulations in the interest of the prevention and control of erosion, such regulations to be first submitted to local referendum and if approved in the referendum to have the force of the law within the district.

The act establishes a soil conservation committee which has power to define the boundaries of each district, to encourage the organization of districts, to bring about an exchange of information and experience among the districts of the state and to coordinate the several districts programs so far as this may be done by advice and consultation. Each district is administered by five supervisors, two appointed by the state committee and three elected by the district membership.

WHAT THE DISTRICTS MAY DO

Each district will have power to carry out preventive and control measures; to enter into contracts with farmers and give them financial and other assistance; to buy lands for retirement or for project purposes; to make loans and gifts of equipment, machinery, fertilizer, seeds, etc., to farmers; to formulate land use plans for soil conservation; and to accept assistance from state, local and federal agencies.

THEREFORE, WHEN WE BUILD, LET US THINK THAT WE BUILD FOREVER. LET IT NOT BE FOR PRESENT DELIGHT, NOR FOR PRESENT USE ALONE. LET IT BE SUCH WORK AS OUR DESCENDANTS WILL THANK US FOR, AND LET US THINK, AS WE LAY STONE ON STONE, THAT A TIME IS TO COME WHEN THOSE STONES WILL BE HELD SACRED BECAUSE OUR HANDS HAVE TOUCHED THEM AND THAT MEN WILL SAY AS THEY LOOK UPON THE LABOR AND THE WROUGHT SUBSTANCE OF THEM, "SEE! THIS OUR FATHERS DID FOR US."

- - - Ruskin

THE PLACE OF FARM MANAGEMENT IN A SOIL CONSERVATION PROGRAM

By

D. H. TAYLOR
Associate Soil Conservationist,
Farm Management

Farm management has been defined in various terms by specialists and many interpretations have been placed on these definitions. We have all heard "it's good farm management to do so and so" or "that is poor farm management." But it is seldom that one gets a definite picture of just what good or poor farm management consists. About the simplest definition is the one given by Dr. G. F. Warren of Cornell University. He states, "When a man is operating a farm in such a manner as to secure the greatest continuous profit from it, then he is practicing good farm management."

Since the complete coordinated program of soil and water conservation is based on the needs of the soil and takes into consideration the economic needs of the farmer, we can see how nearly parallel the above definition is to the basic requirements of our program. We strive to show the farmer how to keep the soil and water on the land where it belongs and when the farmer does this, he is more likely to make the greatest continuous profit from his land.

Good farm management and a complete coordinated program of soil and water conservation cannot be separated for without the two together we can neither have good farm management nor a successful and lasting program of erosion control.

In many cases, considerable changes in land use, farming practices, etc., will have to be made on the farms in order to control erosion. The planning group must realize the tremendous responsibility which has been placed on them in the planning of farms. For not only are we interested in the checking of erosion just for a year or so but we want and must have a program on a farm that will be lasting and one that will grow and become more effective as the years roll by and yield the greatest continuous profit.

There are a few essential requirements from a farm management point of view that should be given careful consideration in the drafting of the plans for a farm. After the planning group has made a trip over the farm and has decided on the various methods of control needed, it would be well to subject the proposed plan to the following questions.

1. Have the essential feed requirements (grain, hay and pasture) of the animals on the farm been provided for?

2. Does the cropping system include a desirable combination of cash, feed, soil improvement and erosion control crops?
3. Does the new plan give a better balance between cultivated areas, pasture and woodland?
4. Will the farm reorganization provide for a more efficient use of man and horse labor and equipment?
5. If, after careful scrutiny, the plans do not fulfil these essentials, can they be altered to meet the need without sacrificing the efficiency of the erosion control plan?

There are some farms on which it is impossible to work out a plan without some farm management weaknesses. In cases of this kind, it is most important that the planning group recognize the full extent of these weak points and inform the farmer as to them and their significance in a lasting erosion control program.

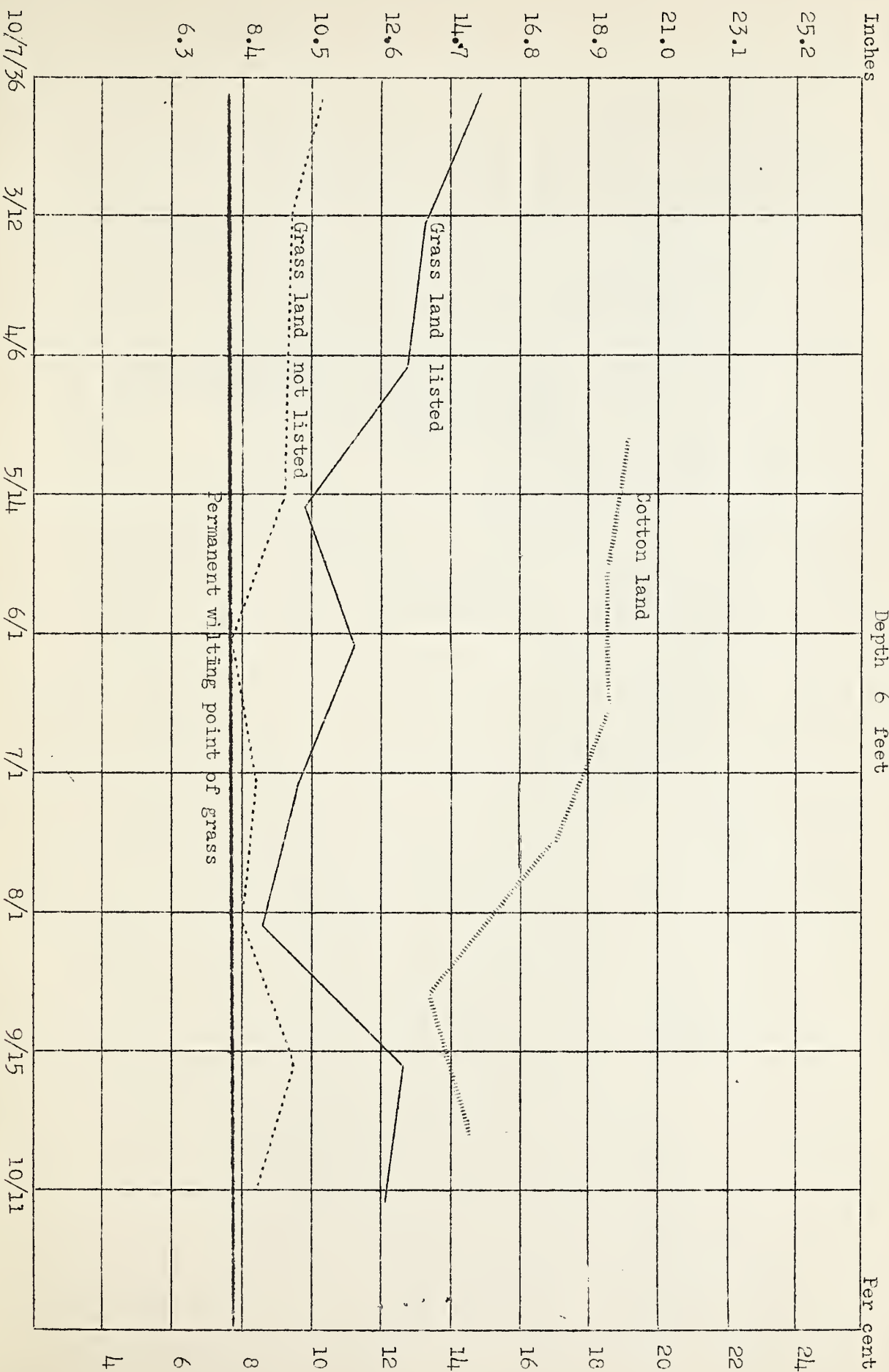
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RELATION OF CROPS IN USE OF WATER

From the standpoint of the ability of crops to use water the accompanying graph furnishes an illustration of what may be termed a sluggish crop and an efficient crop in the use of water. Heavy rainfall occurred in September of 1936 during which time much moisture was stored in the soil. On grass land, winter weeds and wild rye had practically exhausted the reserve before grass had time to start growth the middle of April. By the middle of May the current rainfall and the reserve had been used and the soil was empty and ready to take on additional heavy rainfall. On the cotton land the small cotton plants were not able to use much water during May and June, and it was not until August that the reserve was becoming depleted. In other words, the turnover of moisture stored in the soil is many times greater on grass than on cotton land.

A more liberal use of crops that are capable of using large quantities of water over a longer period of the year possibly offers one of the best solutions to run-off and erosion problems and is possibly a partial answer to the effectiveness of strip cropping throughout the country as a means of preventing soil erosion. The strips of dense growing plants are also strips of crops capable of using large amounts of water and furnish splendid dumping ground for water that comes from areas above, where the soil is already saturated. (See page 11)

MOISTURE IN THE SOIL



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